

Orange-headed Thrush – a photographic record

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On 22 February 2013, at 5.50 PM, I was sitting on my cousin's backyard in Palayur, near Chavakkad, Thrissur district, Kerala talking with my cousin. I heard a call like "cheerp... cheerp" which was not familiar to me. I started to look around and saw a beautiful small bird perching on the branches of a tree nearby. Immediately I took my cam and started shooting. It was a point-and-shoot cam and since the light was too low it could not focus on the bird, it was focusing the areas which is brighter than the bird. I managed to reach close to the bird at about 10-12 feet, and got one ID shot. Immediately after, the bird flew and perched a mango tree nearby and I took some more photos. As I tried to approach the bird more close, it flew to higher branches and I couldn't see it anymore. I heard the call for some more hours. I asked Suhas Kechery about the ID of the bird, explaining the features of the bird, but he had no idea and by the help of Google we assumed that it was an Orange-headed Thrush *Geokichla citrina citrina*. I came back to Doha, where I work and enquired about this bird with bird watchers M.C. Thaju and Dileep Anthikad confirmed the identity of the bird. With the help of them and Praveen J. from Kerala Birder, I came to know this has been reported from Thiruvananthapuram suburbs at least three times and once from Aralam WLS, Kannur.

From the field: Birds

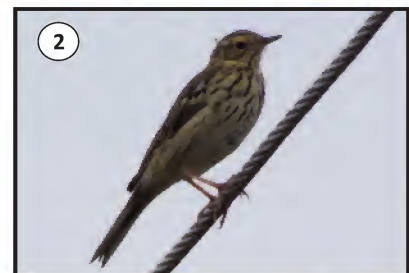
A Probable Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* from Attappadi, Palakkad district - PJ George

A "Tree Pipit" species was photographed on 12 January 2013 [1] and another one on 15 February 2013 [2] at Sambarcode near Agali, Attappadi in Palakkad district. Both images show a heavily streaked pipit with a plain face without the pale spot above dark rear edge of the cheek which is usually present in an Olive-backed Pipit *A. hodgsoni*. However, photographs are not sharp and the upperpart colors are not exactly like a Tree Pipit and hence identification is not confirmed as it's a first for Kerala (Sashikumar *et al.* 2011).



Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* from Puthuvaypu, Ernakulam district - Soni LR

A single Common Ringed Plover in non-breeding plumage was photographed [3] on 4 March 2014 from Puthuvaypu in Ernakulam district. This is the first record of this species from the district and the second photographic record from the state after Lekshmi (2014).



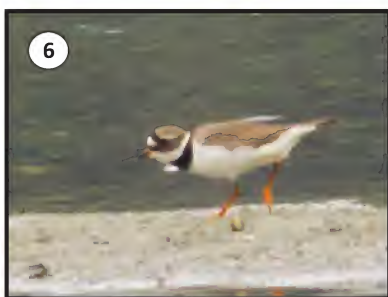
Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* & Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* from Kuttanad Wetlands - Harikumar Mannar

A photograph of a Pratincole taken on 8 January 2014 from a flock of 32 birds seen resting in a dried up paddy field at Moorthitta-Kudavellary stretch of Kuttanad Wetlands turned out to be of a Collared Pratincole [4]. Long tail extending behind the folded wings which separates it from Oriental Pratincole *G. maldivarum* is clearly visible. After 30 minutes, the birds flew and a picture in flight was also taken showing the white on secondaries [5] which is another characteristic field feature. This is the second photographic record of this species from Kerala after Rajeevan & Thomas (2013).





A single Common Ringed Plover in non-breeding plumage was seen at Puthupally near Kayamkulam on 5 March 2014 along with a group of Little Stints and Curlew Sandpipers. Another bird in breeding plumage [6] was seen and photographed on 8 March 2014 from the same area. These are repeat sightings from south-central Kerala after the same was reported from Pallimukkom (Lekshmi 2014) in February.



Malayan Night Heron *Gorsachius melanolophus* from Trikaripur, Kasaragod district - Md Jafer Palot

A Malay Night-Heron juvenile [7] was recovered from Koyonkara, Trikaripur panchayath, Kasaragod district on 13 October 2013. After recuperation in two days it was released near Poomalakavu sacred grove.



Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* and Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus* from Chavakkad Beach, Thrissur district - PP Sreenivasan

A single Isabelline Wheatear was photographed [8] on 27 October 2013 from Chavakkad beach. The bird was probably only migration and this is the first record from Thrissur district (Sashikumar *et al.* 2011) – all previous records have been from Kannur district and one from Kottayam district



A single Caspian Plover [9] was photographed from the same site on 11 October 2013. This is the second photographic record from Kerala after Rajeevan *et al.* (2014) who noted a few couple of weeks back in Kannur district.



Black Stork, *Ciconia nigra* from Periyar Tiger Reserve, Idukki district. - Muhamed Jafer Palot

A single bird [10] was sighted at Peiyar Lake near Edapalayam, Periyar Tiger Reserve on 4 April 2013. From the less glossy plumage and paler colouration of the wing we could identify it as a juvenile of Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*. The previous record of the species from Periyar TR was in February 1987 (Robertson & Jackson, 1992).



References

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Occurrence of the Oriental Orchid Tit Butterfly (*Chliaria othona* Hewitson) in the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary, Kerala.

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A survey of Odonates in the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary was organized by the Kerala Forests & Wildlife Department, in association with Malabar Natural History Society (MNHS), Kozhikode from 30th May to 01st June 2014. During this survey, on 31st June 2014 at 11:00 AM, our group was surveying for Odonates in the deep jungles of Ammavayal (N 11.75396, E 076.30258) area in the Kurichiyad Range. We observed a small swarm of butterflies puddling on the decaying leaves. It was a sunny day after several days of torrential rain. The heterogenous butterfly swarm consisted of fairly common species such as Tiny Grass Blue (*Zizula hylax*), Common Hedge Blue (*Acytolepis puspa*), Red Helen (*Papilio helenus*), Blue Bottle (*Graphium sarpedon*) and Brown awl (*Badamia exclamationis*), which we were able to identify by sight. Among these, we saw a white tailed Lycaenid butterfly which was not familiar to us. It was flying randomly and puddling over the decaying leaves and mud. It was a beautiful butterfly having brown marginal mark over the tip of its wings. The fore wing was decorated with uneven brown bands. Its hind wing had brown and pale yellow coloured broken bands. There was a pair of white tails with black margins and a black spot bordered by orange colour on each hind wing. The upper side of the wings carried flashing purplish blue colour with partially spread black colour on forewings.

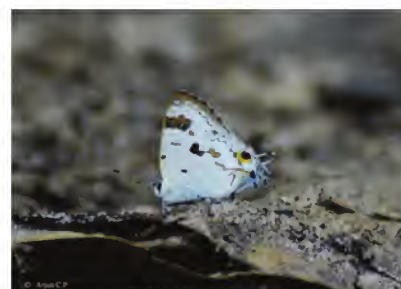
We took several photographs of the individual, and with the help of experts, later identified it as the butterfly, Oriental Orchid tit (*Chliaria othona*), which is very rare in south India.

Orchid Tit is one of the rare butterflies belonging to the family Lycaenidae (Kehimkar, 2008). This butterfly is fairly common in Northern India, but was reported to be very rare in Southern India. In India, *Chliaria othona* is distributed in the Western Ghats, Uttaranchal to Arunachal Pradesh, the Northeast, West Bengal and Andaman Islands. It was also reported from the neighboring countries such as Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar. Orchid Tit prefers wet forests of up to 1524 meters altitude from the mean sea level and occasionally visits damp patches for mud puddling (George, 2011). The caterpillars of Orchid tit feed on the flower buds and flowers of orchids (Kehimkar, 2008; George, 2011), and hence the name.

There are no published reports of its sighting from Kerala state. However, it was sighted from the Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary (Kannur district) by Dr. Jafer Palot (*Pers. Comm.*), and from the Peppara Wildlife Sanctuary (Thiruvananthapuram district) by Nithin, R. (as reported on the website www.ifoundbutterflies.org). The present one is thus the first record of it from the Wayanad district, as an addition to the butterfly checklist of the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary.

Acknowledgements

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Oriental Orchid Tit (*Chliaria othona*)
from Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary